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Central Intelligence Agency



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20 May 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: William B. Staples  
Executive Secretary  
United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

FROM: [redacted]  
Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Nuclear Announcement Policy [redacted]

REFERENCE: Memo fm Executive Secretary, ACDA, re Nuclear Test  
Announcement Policy, dtd 9 May 1985 [redacted]

1. Thank you for your memorandum of 9 May 1985 addressing this subject and requesting our views on the proposed ACDA revision to the current draft NSDD on Nuclear Test Announcement Policy. [redacted]

2. We have reviewed your draft revision and have the following two comments:

-- We have no views about the policy question of announcing a larger number of Soviet underground nuclear tests.

-- To such a policy end, we believe that the threshold for determining which tests to announce could be altered; i.e., reduced and thereby announce a larger number. We do not agree, however, that the basis for these announcements should be changed from estimated yield to [redacted].

3. The reasons for our view that [redacted] should not replace yield are:

-- The proposed ACDA revision represents a fairly significant US policy decision because it changes entirely the basis for public announcements and we see no powerful reason for the change.

-- Atmospheric tests will continue to be announced on the basis of estimated yield and to announce underground tests on another basis would be inconsistent and confusing.

-- Estimated yields have been used for decades and are (and likely will continue to be) the basis for monitoring the nuclear threshold and limitations treaties.

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-- The issue of concern, in public and in government, almost exclusively is the number of Soviet tests above a certain estimated yield, not a [redacted].

-- If [redacted] is used as the basis, interested observers will ask -- in light of current policy -- what the yields (actual, estimated, or whatever) of these devices were in fact.

-- [redacted]

-- If ACDA's proposed change becomes public, as it almost surely will, it will raise indirectly what we consider to be unnecessary questions about the accuracy of our yield estimates. [redacted]

4. I hope this is helpful, even though we disagree with ACDA's proposals. If there is more we can do to assist you here, please let us know. [redacted]

cc: Robert M. Kimmitt  
Executive Secretary, NSC

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SUBJECT: Nuclear Announcement Policy

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[redacted] (17 May 1985)

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